United Nations A/73/165

General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 July 2018

Original: English

Seventy-third session
Item 74 (b) of the preliminary list*
Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

United Nations declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas

Note by the Secretariat

The Human Rights Council, in its resolution 36/22, requested the open-ended intergovernmental working group on a United Nations declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas to submit an annual report on progress made to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly for their consideration.

In accordance with the practice established because of the timing of the reporting cycle, the open-ended intergovernmental working group submits the report of its fifth session, held from 9 to 13 April 2018, as contained in document A/HRC/39/67, both to the General Assembly and to the Human Rights Council.

* A/73/50.

18-11747 (E) 200718

Please recycle

United Nations A/73/166

General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 July 2018

Original: English

Seventy-third session
Item 21 of the preliminary list*
Sustainable development

Letter dated 6 July 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the Final Declaration of the High-level International Conference on the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018–2028 (see annex I),** held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, from 20 to 22 June 2018, and the Co-Chairs' summary of the Conference (see annex II).**

The participants in the Conference have requested, in the Final Declaration, that the Co-Chairs' summary, accompanied by the Final Declaration, be presented to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

Therefore, I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annexes circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 21, before or during the high-level political forum, as a joint contribution of Tajikistan and the United Nations towards the advancement of Sustainable Development Goal 6 and other water-related goals.

(*Signed*) Mahmadamin **Mahmadaminov**

* A/73/50.
** The annexes are being circulated in the language of submission only.

18-11766 (E) 180718

Please recycle

Annex I to the letter dated 6 July 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

High-level International Conference on the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018–2028

Final Declaration

Promoting action and policy dialogue

Dushanbe, Tajikistan
20–21 June 2018

The High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028, met in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on 20-21 June 2018, to discuss how to achieve the objectives of the Decade, contained in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 71/222 of 21 December 2016, in order to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Heads of State and Government, ministers and other high-level dignitaries took part in this historical gathering together with representatives of international and regional organizations, local governments, civil society, the private sector and academia. The Conference also provided a timely and necessary platform for elaborating recommendations in the run-up of the next session of the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development where, among other issues, the Sustainable Development Goal 6 to "ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all" will be discussed. The Conference built on the outcomes of the Eighth World Water Forum, the High-Level Panel on Water, the Water for Life Decade and other major water-related events and platforms at the global and regional level.

We, the participating representatives of states and organizations,

Recalling the United Nations General Assembly resolution 71/222 of 21 December 2016, by which it proclaimed the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028 (hereinafter referred to as the "Water Action Decade"),

Also *recalling* the United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", which reiterates the importance of "ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all" as a Sustainable Development Goal to be achieved by 2030, the underpinning importance of water related issues in other goals and targets in order to reach the overall Agenda and the centrality of the "No One Left Behind" principle,

Further *recalling* resolutions 68/157 of 18 December 2013 on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation and 70/169 of 17 December 2015 on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation of the United Nations General Assembly,

Taking note of the efforts and extensive work carried out by the High-Level Panel on Water,

Acknowledging the additional challenges facing countries with water scarcity and concerned with the impacts of such challenges, including inter alia their ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals,

Highlighting the challenge of rapid population growth and the importance of water management in disaster risk reduction in mitigating and adapting to climate change and in ensuring ecosystem protection, particularly of watersheds in mountain areas, wetlands, deltas and in coastal zones, in order to increase the resilience of communities, and *noting* that water management can contribute, as applicable, to the implementation of relevant multilateral agreements, such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the 2015 Paris Agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,

Stressing the need to manage in an integrated and sustainable manner water resources from source to sea around the water, food, energy and environment nexus, including by promoting the concept of circular economy and other relevant solutions to reduce, recycle and safely reuse water,

Expressing concern about the current and projected adverse impacts of climate change on water resources and sanitation, as well as the challenges posed by pathogens, nutrients and emerging pollutants, including pharmaceuticals and microplastics, that are threatening human health and the quality of surface and groundwater,

Bearing in mind the need to implement integrated urban water management, including sustainable waste management systems, in line with the New Urban Agenda, as part of Integrated Water Resource Management, by implementing inter alia nature-based solutions, decentralized wastewater management and improved rainwater management and harvesting,

Recognizing that, according to Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation, the world is not on track to achieve water-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets at the global level by 2030 at the current rate of progress,

Recognizing that effective lake and river basin organizations, water planning and target setting at the appropriate levels, including of drinking water supply and sanitation safety, are key to the sustainable management of water resources and require coordination of actors, development of infrastructure, benefit sharing and harmonization of national and basin wide development agendas,

Recognizing that parliamentarians and citizens make an important contribution to water governance alongside national governments, as well as regional and local authorities, as applicable,

Reemphasizing the key role of women for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6, their insufficient representation in water-related decision-making processes and among water professionals at all levels, the disproportionate burden carried by many women and girls for water collection and use, their specific needs of safe water and sanitation facilities and the need to create an enabling environment to address these issues,

Acknowledging the importance of ensuring water availability for civilians and protecting civilian water infrastructure and service delivery in the event of conflicts and natural disasters, as well as for refugee and migrant populations living in informal or inadequate housing,

Looking forward to the Mid-Term Review of the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028, as an important milestone focused on the goals of the Decade and water-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets,

Noting the ongoing efforts by UN-Water in responding to the expectations of the international community, supporting the monitoring of the SDG 6 targets and providing coordination among its members,

Also *noting* the possibility to create an International Center for the Water Action Decade in Dushanbe with the support of the Government of Tajikistan and other interested parties to sustain the process towards implementation of the goals of the Water Action Decade and the organization of Water Action Decade Conferences,

Hereby *reiterate* our determination to achieve the objectives of the Water Action Decade and *declare* to:

Promote, at the local, national, regional and global levels, opportunities for public and private investment in infrastructure, including through the development of innovative financial instruments and mechanisms, and seek to *increase* the efficiency of investment to conserve and sustainably manage freshwater, wastewater and water contained in soil and vegetation, support community-based efforts and develop non-conventional water resources, such as water reuse and desalination;

Strengthen the capacities, resources and skills, as well as *improve* knowledge generation and exchange of practices, to support national and local governments in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in those countries and for those people furthest behind;

Make concentrated and coordinated efforts to build innovative, robust, flexible and fair systems for source to sea Integrated Water Resources Management, to increase water use efficiency and productivity, particularly in agriculture, energy, tourism, urban and rural development, as well as industry, to better appreciate the value of water and associated ecosystem services, to reduce emissions and the transport of hazardous substances and to take into consideration the serious impacts on the quality and availability of water resources caused from extractive activities;

Commit to reduce inequalities in access and ensure affordability of safe drinking water and sanitation services that are basic human needs, essential to the health and well-being of families and communities, to avoid any kind of discrimination and to support countries and communities with specific needs and people suffering from poverty and in vulnerable situations, especially women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities and those living in remote areas, going beyond the household, particularly targeting schools, healthcare facilities and workplaces;

Improve communication and access to practical, water-related information and funding to empower communities at all levels, through clear messages, to promote participation, equity, improved accountability and social innovation, supporting the engagement of civil society representatives in decision-making processes related to the rational, transparent and sustainable use and management of water resources and the provision of water-related services;

Step up the efforts to develop tools, build institutional and human resources capacity, foster technology exchange, improve data that are appropriately disaggregated, disseminate knowledge, including traditional knowledge, skills and enhanced scientific and technical know-how to better understand the water cycle, contribute to the identification of appropriate solutions, including through South-South and triangular cooperation and improved research, education and training with a local perspective and special attention to children and youth;

Facilitate partnerships at all levels among different kinds of stakeholders, including public authorities, the private sector, civil society organizations and academia, with the engagement of women, youth, local communities and indigenous peoples, as appropriate, to develop and implement actions that address problems

related to water and sanitation at suitable levels and to promote the all-of-society engagement necessary to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

Prioritize water diplomacy and transboundary cooperation in line with the applicable principles of international law by strengthening inter alia the means of information and data exchange, open and inclusive multi-level and intersectoral dialogue in order to foster mutually beneficial solutions and institutional arrangements, such as basin commissions and plans, among riparian countries, for the development of transboundary river basins, lakes and aquifers and for protection of ecosystems and recharge zones;

Promote actions to address water-related disasters by significantly decreasing loss of life and damage as percentage of gross domestic product, by treating investment in disaster risk reduction as integral to expanding capacity for socioeconomic growth, by integrating science into policy, by substantially increasing investment in disaster risk reduction and establishing financing and investment principles and by supporting alliance of alliances in recognition that climate change may exacerbate water-related disasters, contributing to promote action for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction activities;

Recall the United Nations Secretary General's plan for the Water Action Decade 2018-2028 as a blueprint to coordinate and catalyze action throughout the Decade and *invite* the United Nations Secretary General to report to the Member States about the progress made by the United Nations and its entities with the implementation of this action plan;

Note the intention of the Government of Tajikistan to hold Water Action Decade Conferences in Dushanbe on a biennial basis and to keep organizing them in an open and inclusive manner and *invite* all states, the United Nations, including UN-Water, and other relevant stakeholders, to actively participate in this Dushanbe Process;

Invite countries to consider the establishment of Water Action Decade centers and partnerships on specific themes, such as one for water and disasters, or at the regional level and use the already existing water-related centers, programs and partnerships, such as those under the auspices of the United Nations and its entities, including UNESCO Centers and Chairs, as useful mechanisms to enhance dialogue, cooperation, technical and scientific transfer and development for the effective implementation of the Decade;

Further *invite* all Member States to consider appointing water champions, who will play a mobilizing role for the Water Action Decade;

Strongly *recommend* Member States to prepare and adopt national strategies and plans and implement actions for the achievement of the water-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets, as well as the goals of the Water Action Decade;

Ask the United Nations, within existing resources, regional organizations, International Financial Institutions, philanthropic organizations, the private sector and development partners to support the implementation of the Water Action Decade, particularly in developing countries, Least Developed Countries, countries suffering from water scarcity, Small Island Developing States and Land-Locked Developing Countries and middle-income countries, considering their specific circumstances;

Request the Government of Tajikistan to present the Chair's Summary of this Conference, accompanied by this Declaration, to the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, to the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and other relevant venues;

Urge all Member States to actively participate in the preparation process of a United Nations General Assembly resolution on the Mid-Term Comprehensive

Review of the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028, to be undertaken during the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly;

Request the Secretariat of this First High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028, to collect, in collaboration with the International Steering Committee, the actions and partnerships that were proposed by the participating states and organizations during this Conference in a document to be entitled "Call for Action and Partnership";

Invite the participating states and organizations to share the progress made on the actions and partnerships proposed during this Conference at inter alia the Second Water Action Decade Conference, and as a contribution towards the Mid-Term Review of the Decade;

Decide that the theme of the Second Water Action Decade Conference shall be "catalyzing water action and partnership at the local, national, regional and global levels" to achieve the goals of the Water Action Decade and water-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets;

Express our sincere appreciation to the Government of Tajikistan for hosting the Water Action Decade Conferences in Dushanbe and for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to all participants; we also *express* our sincere appreciation to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, UN-Water and other partners for their support.

Annex II to the letter dated 6 July 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

High-level International Conference on the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018–2028

Co-Chairs' summary

Dushanbe, Tajikistan
20–22 June 2018

The High Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028, organized by the Government of Tajikistan with the support of the United Nations, met in Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan, on 20-22 June 2018. Under the theme "Promoting Action for Policy Dialogue", the Conference sought to discuss the ways in which Member States, the United Nations, other international and regional organizations, international financial institutions, the private sector, as well as civil society and other stakeholders, can contribute to the Decade and support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

High-level delegations and representatives came from 120 countries, including heads of state and government, deputy prime-ministers, ministers and deputy ministers, ambassadors, permanent representatives to the United Nations and special envoys, representatives of 46 international and regional organizations, such as the United Nations and its specialized agencies and programs, as well as representatives of local governments, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and the private sector. In total, more than 1,500 people took part in two days of discussion about one of the most pressing issues and ambitious goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Conference provides valuable opportunities for Member States and other stakeholders to promote actions, partnerships and policy dialogue, as well as review the implementation of the Decade and progress made towards implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6 - ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, and other water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. The high-level international conference will also ensure timely follow-up in view of the Mid-Term and Final Review of the Decade.

This Conference comprised an Opening Ceremony at the level of Head of State and Government, a Plenary Session where all heads of official delegations were invited to deliver a statement, Action Panels on specific themes, as well as Pre-Conference Events and Side Events. The Action Panels focused on the Sustainable Development Goals and on the objectives of the Water Action Decade, addressing progress in reporting, analysis of main gaps in implementation, reporting on progress to support partnerships and other proposals made by the different actors, sharing innovative practices and presenting new proposals for actions. Pre-Conference Events were held to promote dialogues for major groups that are important for water management but are not sufficiently represented in decision-making on water-related issues, such as women, children, youth and academia. Special attention was paid to cover the issues and enable participation of Least Developed Countries, Land-Locked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

Opening Ceremony

During the opening ceremony of the Conference, nine speakers at the level of Heads of State and Government and heads of international organizations shared their views and insights on various issues at global, regional and country levels. In his speech, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon, emphasized the need to mobilize and address water-related issues at all levels. He stated the intention of Tajikistan to convene this conference every two years and to create an international center in Dushanbe as a contribution to the implementation of the Water Action Decade. He also praised the positive dynamics of water cooperation in Central Asia and the development of a program to provide the population of Tajikistan with safe drinking water by 2030, in accordance to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In his message, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, H.E. Mr. Liu Zhenmin, underscored how water and sanitation are at the core of sustainable development and the need to go beyond business as usual. This conference represented the first opportunity for all stakeholders to engage in the United Nations Secretary-General's plan for the Water Action Decade 2018-2028. In this regard, he drew the attention of the participants on the outcome document of the High-Level Panel on Water and to the new approach it proposes to achieve the water-related goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The United Nations stands ready to support countries in implementing water and sanitation-related targets.

The opening ceremony of the Conference was also addressed by the President of Turkmenistan, H.E. Mr. Gurbanguli Berdimuhamedov, by the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Mamnoon Hussain, by the Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, H.E. Mr. Abdullah Abdullah, by the Vice President of the World Bank for Europe and Central Asia, H.E. Mr. Cyril Muller, by the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the United Nations and the President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, H.E. Mrs. Marie Chatardová, by the President of International Fund for Agricultural Development and the Chair of UN-Water, H.E. Mr. Gilbert Houngbo, and by United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and Coordinator of Scaling Up Nutrition Movement, H.E. Ms. Gerda Verburg. A video message was also delivered by H.E. Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and President of the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly. The ceremony was moderated by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan and Chairman of the National Organizing Committee of the conference, H.E. Mr. Kohir Rasulzoda.

Plenary Session: Mobilizing Actions for Sustainable Water Development

This session, which was co-chaired by Prime Minister Rasulzoda and Under-Secretary-General Liu and continued during both days of the conference, provided an opportunity for all the heads of official delegations to deliver a statement. It was opened by a keynote speech on the SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation. Its key message was that the world is not on track to achieve SDG 6, particularly with regard to safe drinking water and sanitation. It provided some analytical insights on the most pressing issues. This speech was followed by reports from the four Pre-Conference Events, held the previous day: Women Water Forum; Children Water Forum; Water and Science for Sustainable Future; Climate and Water Dialogue. Several high-level representatives expressed support and keen interest in the transformation of the Dushanbe Conferences into the "Dushanbe Process" for the Water Action Decade and in the creation of an International Center for the Water Action Decade in Dushanbe, aimed at supporting the implementation of the Decade, including the organization of the biennial Water Decade Conferences.

Action Panels

The main discussions then continued within twelve Action Panels under the overarching theme of conference "Promoting Action for Policy Dialogue". They were co-organized by various entities of the United Nations and other international organizations and development partners. They focused discussions on issues that play an important role for the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028.

Action Panel 1.1 on Drinking Water and Sanitation

Co-organized by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), this panel stressed the need to empower partnership for action, to ensure good health and educational outcomes, to use innovative water, sanitation and hygiene financing, particularly for the vulnerable, and to strengthen targeted monitoring. Setting country-tailored national targets and adapted progress indicators for water, sanitation and hygiene was also emphasized as vital and facilitating efficient and effective water governance. It was further highlighted water and sanitation safety planning at utility or community level to lead the way in transforming drinking-water and sanitation service provision. The panel stressed strongly increased and well-leveraged investments as essential to improve access to safe drinking water and sanitation services that are resilient to the adverse impacts of climate and demographic changes.

Action Panel 1.2 on Integrated Water Resource Management, Water Efficiency and Productivity

This panel, which was co-organized by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the Global Water Partnership (GWP), concluded that promoting holistic, balanced approaches to water resources management will help realize not only SDG 6, but help make progress across the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Moreover, it was stressed that Integrated Water Resource Management must be applied and include rural and urban perspectives, social and economic aspects, address inequalities and inclusiveness and use source-to-sea approaches. Accounting and auditing was also put forward as essential to manage water resources. Therefore, tools for resource management and capacity building were highlighted, together with the need for political will and responsibility. Several speakers also echoed the keywords partnerships and community involvement for successful water management.

Action Panel 1.3 on Water Quality and Ecosystems

Co-organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Stockholm International Water Institute, the key messages from this panel included that users, consumers and polluters of water resources from agricultural, industrial, energy and touristic areas need to exchange information, collaborate and identify shared objectives to protect water resources and ecosystems. The need to development an open monitoring network was highlighted as vital for the valorization of water quality rather than quantity values. Moreover, cooperation was stressed as crucial to ensure the research and knowledge dissemination and to improve the scientific understanding on emerging pollutants and the impact of climate change on water quality and water-related ecosystems. The panel further noted the need to develop effective solutions and policy responses among all stakeholders.

Action Panel 2.1 on Capacity Building including Improving Knowledge and Education

Co-organized by the United Nations Development Programme and UNESCO, this panel emphasized how capacity development to achieve the SDGs is about country ownership and leadership, as well as adaptive, integrated, whole of society approaches that take into account the broader economic and socio-political context. The panel also stressed that it is a continuous long-term process and requires measurement based on clear evidence of relevant changes and, at the same time, a pre-requisite and zero-regret investment in moving towards water for sustainable development. The need for a holistic approach encompassing all levels of water education was also highlighted, as well as addressing its tertiary and professional dimensions and providing training for policy makers and the mass media, thereby contributing to a water-smart society. Technology was recognized as a disruptor and innovator for water-related capacity development, knowledge and education for all.

Action Panel 2.2 on Water-related Communication, Advocacy and Networking

Co-convened by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UN-Water, the session concluded that different stakeholders need to consider aligning their advocacy, communication and networking efforts and integrate bottom-up approaches. Successful advocacy efforts were stressed to require multi-sector coalitions and cooperation with the involvement of the public, the private sector, as well as major groups to avoid silos. It also concluded that advocacy efforts at global, regional, national, local and community levels may be supported by regular dialogues, conferences and meetings to promote the delivery and implementation of water-related goals. Communication campaigns, preparation of outreach materials and reports targeted with clear and tailor-made narratives was also highlighted as important to promote the involvement of academia, youth, women and civil society. The panel further noted the need for good case studies to be presented and collected in order for lessons to be learned and replicated.

Action Panel 2.3 on Water-related Partnerships for Action

Organized by the GWP, the session emphasized three strong messages: partnerships contribute to good water governance and create platforms for participation and dialogue; they need to understand the multi-level governance context in which they operate and to be mindful in their design of differences in capacity, cultures, power, personalities, and economies; they are critical as they create a space for the discovery of new and innovative financial solutions to our complex water challenges. The panel further proposed to initiate a dialogue between the many existing water partnership organizations to strengthen collaboration efforts for sustainable water management and to utilize the flexibility and energy of young water professionals as catalysts for partnership building.

Action Panel 3.1 on Water, Food, Energy and Environment Nexus

Organized by FAO, the session stressed the water, energy and food nexus and the dependency on the environment and ecosystems for their sustainability, as well as the inter-relations with a circular economy. The panel highlighted the inherent complexity in these relationships, while presenting some risks and potential for conflict, as well as the opportunity for a new way of looking at shared benefits and opportunities. The panel noted understanding these relations requires investments in capacity building at various levels. Furthermore, particular emphasis was given to support and empower women's groups, particularly smallholder farmers. The panel noted the nexus approach works well with the SDG process, which offers

opportunities for integration across a range of SDGs through a "systems approach". Investments into the nexus was also emphasized to require tradeoffs based on detailed stakeholder negotiations, followed by the development of joint plans, mutual understanding and agreement on tradeoffs, leading to political decisions. The panel further noted to the consideration of the nexus can provide an effective tool for negotiations across transboundary water resources.

Action Panel 3.2 on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction

Co-organized by Switzerland and the European Union, the session stressed the importance for a resilience approach as key to link climate change adaptation and mitigation, disaster risk reduction and sustainable development. Panelists noted the need to know the risks and be prepared, as prevention is much more efficient than response and recovery. Panelist noted, although one-third of official development assistance goes to prevention and risk reduction, costs to recover are more than threefold. The panel further noted the need for innovative solutions, as well as overcoming uncertainty and aiming for inclusive, transformative world that leaves no one behind, as defined by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Therefore, the panel stressed the need for innovative financing to implement multi-sectorial and multi service programs that respond to the needs of all communities. Furthermore, the panel emphasized the need for all levels to cooperate at multilateral, regional, transboundary, national and local levels, as well as the importance to find means to implement the global agenda in a coherent, holistic, integrated and inclusive manner.

Action Panel 3.3 on Water Sustainability in Cities and Human Settlements

Organized by UN-Habitat, the session stressed despite the accelerating population growth and urbanization, no one should be left behind for the provision of water supply and sanitation. Panelists emphasized attention should be given to vulnerable groups in cities living in slums, as well as to displaced people because of conflicts and environmental hazards. They highlighted for cities, it is important to develop appropriate policy and legal frameworks to guide the urbanization process and consider urbanization as an opportunity for development. Furthermore, the need was stressed for transparent financing mechanisms and monitoring instruments to reach a balance between, on the one hand, affordability for the poor and, on the other, cost recovery for water service providers. Panelists also noted the need for efficient use of water resources in cities against the background of growing population and climate change, therefore the importance to live with nature in a river basin and recover, reuse and recycle water as much as possible. Finally, it was emphasized efforts should be taken to enhance the capacity of water utilities and local governments through capacity building and financial decentralization to meet the challenges of rapid urbanization.

Action Panel 4.1 on Financing, Investment and Resilient Infrastructure

Co-organized by the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the session concluded that financing, investment and resilient infrastructure under the SDGs aim substantially higher than the Millennium Development Goals, and therefore there is a need for a shift under these new circumstances. The panel stressed the need not only for additional financial, but also human and technical resources, noting the opportunities for efficiency gains in developing countries to be as much as 65% of utility costs. The panel also noted the need to explore full continuum of public, concessional and commercial financing solutions, and the importance that governments commit sufficient own resources to this vital sector. The panel further noted the need for service providers to shift towards greater credit worthiness and the importance of concessional financing to help toward

financial sustainability. The panel highlighted financing options will show results once financial and technical efficiency have been coupled with improved governance and institutional reforms, and private sector resources are in an environment of effective institutional frameworks for management and oversight. The panel noted the importance for service providers to look at blending public finance with alternative revenue sources, such concessional and commercial finance, as well as governance, regulatory and tariff challenges that need to be dealt with to make business models viable.

Action Panel 4.2 on Transboundary Cooperation and Water Diplomacy

Co-convened by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe, the session concluded that international water law is fundamental to ensure long-term predictability of cooperation, prevent adverse transboundary impacts and ensure equitable and reasonable use of water resources. The panel highlighted that boosting water diplomacy building on the benefits of transboundary water cooperation allows preventing or resolving conflicts, while promoting regional stability and integration. The need for resources to promote and strengthen transboundary water cooperation was stressed, as well as the importance of water diplomacy to implement coordinated actions to develop transboundary basins in a sustainable manner. To achieve these outcomes, the panel recommended fostering progress on the development of agreements and effective institutions to support long-term, predictable and equitable transboundary water cooperation, as well as increasing financial and water diplomacy efforts to support sustainable development in transboundary basins, building on the benefits of cooperation.

Action Panel 4.3 on Water for Vulnerable People, including Refugees and Migrants

Co-organized by UN-Water and the International Organization for Migration with the support of FAO and in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the session discussed the issues related to water and people in vulnerable situations, such as migrants, internally displaced people, women and rural poor. The panel concluded that the SDGs cannot be fully achieved if the conditions of these groups are not considered and their needs addressed. The panel highlighted water challenges, such as scarcity, may be among the drivers of migration, but can also be caused by migration, and climate change further exacerbates the pressure on water resources. The panel noted most of the poor and vulnerable people live in rural areas and are smallholders who rely on agriculture for their subsistence. The panel also noted data and information on water and its relationship with migration is scarce and must be improved. Panelists highlighted water scarcity can be driven by multiple factors, which must be known to design appropriate solutions for vulnerable people. They further noted migration governance needs a comprehensive approach, including other perspectives such as water management, rural development and poverty reduction, which requires cooperation of different stakeholders, such as governments, international organizations, research, civil society and the private sector. The panel stressed the need to identify different categories of vulnerable people, such as women and youth, so that tailored strategies to each category can be defined.

Side Events

Moreover, six Side Events were organized by global, regional and national actors. These activities created an additional platform for wider discussion on various water-related issues and priority themes of the conference:

– Side Event 1: Fostering innovation in water and agriculture for smallholders;

- Side Event 2: Meeting of the extended committee in the framework of the "Student research competition on sustainable management of natural resources in Central Asia and Afghanistan project";
- Side Event 3: Young water professionals;
- Side Event 4: Migration in the age of vanishing waters;
- Side event 5: Implementation of the water sector reform in the Republic of Tajikistan;
- Side event 6: Public dialogue on the SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2018.

Exhibition

An important highlight of the conference was the International Exhibition "Water for Sustainable Development", where organizations at the international, regional and national level showcased their experience. This event attested the presence of enormous potential to address urgent water issues.

Excursions

The National Organizing Committee organized excursions to the Nurek Hydropower Plan, the Rogun Hydropower Plant, the Hissor Fortress and the Sarez Lake, on the last day of the conference for participants to explore potential solutions to water-related issues, as well as to learn more about the history and experience the friendliness of the Host Country.

Media Coverage

The conference was widely covered by media, including through social media. Millions of people in Tajikistan and beyond were able to follow this important international event, obtain the necessary information, keep abreast of the global water agenda and, to some extent, be part of it. The official hashtags of the conference were #DushanbeWaterConf and #WaterActionDecade.

Outcome Documents

The High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028, produced three outcome documents: this Co-chairs' Summary, a Final Declaration, which was adopted by acclamation by the representatives of the participating states and organizations, and a Call for Action and Partnership, which was prepared by the Conference Secretariat on the basis of the proceedings of the conference. The Final Declaration and the Call for Action and Partnership are both annexed to this document.

The Final Declaration reflects the key messages that emerged from the policy dialogue and several important conclusions and recommendations. In particular, this document stresses the main challenges ahead and recalls the key instruments available to address them. The Final Declaration calls upon Member States and other stakeholders inter alia to increase water-related investment and its efficiency, to reduce inequalities in access and ensure affordability of safe drinking water and sanitation services for all, to address water-related disasters by substantially increasing investment, among other things. It also notes the intention of the Government of Tajikistan to hold Water Action Decade Conferences in Dushanbe on a biennial basis and to keep organizing them in an open and inclusive manner and invites all Member States, the United Nations, including UN-Water, as well other relevant stakeholders, to actively participate in the Dushanbe Process.

The Call for Action and Partnership contains all the initiatives that were proposed during this conference as a contribution to the implementation of the Water Action Decade at all levels. This document aims at taking stock of the actions and partnerships in the framework of the Decade and at contributing to their follow-up. It also includes the proposal to establish an International Center for the Water Action Decade in Dushanbe, as well as the idea to establish a register for actions and partnerships that contribute to achieve the objectives of the Decade, starting from those included in the document.

The conference was a clear success, largely thanks to the joint and coordinated efforts of all parties. The Government of Tajikistan will present this Co-chairs' Summary, the Final Declaration and the Call for Action and Partnership to the United Nations General Assembly at its Seventy-Third Session. The participants expressed their sincere appreciation to the Government of Tajikistan for hosting the Conference in Dushanbe and for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to all participants. They also manifested gratitude to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, UN-Water and other partners for their support.

United Nations A/73/167

General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 July 2018
Original: English

Seventy-third session
Item 148 of the provisional agenda*
Administration of justice at the United Nations

Activities of the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

As the United Nations celebrates its seventy-third anniversary, the Organization continues to respond to new and emerging global challenges, as well as to the ever-changing security and political environment. Reform initiatives are under way within the United Nations to ensure that it can respond to an evolving world. The Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services provides critical services that support all staff, including all levels of management, during these periods of organizational change.

The present report is the tenth covering the activities of the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services, which provides informal workplace conflict resolution services to the Secretariat, funds and programmes (United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Office for Project Services and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The report contains statistical data and information on the activities of the Office carried out during the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017. It focuses on Secretariat-specific activities, including dispute-resolution services, outreach activities to promote greater conflict competence among staff and managers, and makes observations on systemic issues. Detailed information on the activities undertaken specifically by the Ombudsman for United Nations Funds and Programmes and the Ombudsman for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is provided in the annual reports made available on the respective intranet pages and/or websites.

* A/73/150.

18-11799 (E) 130818

Please recycle

I. Introduction

A. Towards a harmonious United Nations workplace

1. In his report on shifting the management paradigm in the United Nations: ensuring a better future for all (A/72/492), the Secretary-General outlined a series of major reforms expected to have a transformational impact on the Organization in both the short and long terms. With the goal of making the United Nations more nimble, effective, transparent, accountable, efficient, pragmatic and decentralized to better support its normative and operational activities, the ambitious reform agenda may at times have a destabilizing effect on staff. Acknowledging an exciting opportunity for improvement in the Organization, it is also a time when staff members must adapt to evolving mandates and new administrative processes while responding to the ever-growing demands for quality performance and increasing hardships and risks in the field. Drawing on its experience of fundamental organizational change and the potential for increased discomfort in the workplace, the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services provides an informal institutional capacity to prevent and resolve workplace conflict and promote workplace harmony.

2. The Office provides informal conflict-resolution options specifically tailored to complex work situations and develops capacity among participants to prevent future conflict. The informal process can address a great breadth of issues, including those with and without a legal component, in a way that is consistent with the promotion of peace by the United Nations and the use of dialogue to resolve disputes between and within nations.

B. Mandate of the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services

3. As a single integrated office, the terms of reference of the Office were promulgated by the Secretary-General, in consultation with the executive heads of the separately administered funds, programmes and entities of the United Nations system. The Office is guided by the core principles of independence, neutrality, confidentiality and informality, which are aligned with internationally established standards of practice for both the profession of organizational ombudsman and for professional mediators (see ST/SGB/2016/7).

4. The Office provides confidential and impartial assistance to resolve workplace disputes wherever United Nations staff are located. Staff at all levels seek the assistance of the Office on a broad range of issues, including disputes relating to contract renewal, staff selection, perceived discrimination and unfair treatment, the imposition of disciplinary measures, interpersonal issues and important managerial decisions. In addition, staff members sometimes turn to the Office for help in unravelling bureaucratic knots or when there has been a lack of response to an administrative request or entitlement query. The Office assists staff through a variety of dispute resolution approaches, including exploring options, coaching, mediation, facilitation, group processes and team-building. During the reporting period, as the Organization elevated its response to allegations of sexual and other misconduct, the Office continues to be a valuable confidential resource to staff.

5. The Office identifies trends and systemic issues underlying conflicts based on cases addressed or issues that otherwise come to its attention. These are raised with the Organization's management on an ongoing basis. The Office endeavours to assist employees to develop the knowledge, attitude and skills to handle conflicts

constructively ("conflict competence") by offering thematic informational sessions and workshops, skill building initiatives, group processes, and individual coaching.

6. These broad areas of work are intertwined and interdependent. Issues uncovered during contact with visitors often provide the means to identify systemic gaps and inform the design of broader conflict competence and prevention initiatives. These areas of work are embedded in the core responsibilities of all case officers (ombudsmen and mediators), thus ensuring a holistic and inclusive approach to conflict resolution, as well as an optimal and efficient utilization of the resources of the Office.

II. Overview of the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services

7. The Office serves the constituencies of the following entities, through its three pillars: the Secretariat; the funds and programmes, including the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Office for Project Services and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; and UNHCR. Each pillar is established and administered by its respective entity or entities.

8. Staff from the three pillars continue to collaborate on a regular basis to harmonize practices and to share knowledge. Regular participation in the discussion of cases and practice parameters enhances mutual learning and standardizes responses to common problems. The three pillars share a confidential and secure case-management system that allows for common categorization and reporting of case data.

9. The Office is headquartered in New York and has seven regional offices and a mediation service as established by the General Assembly in its resolution 62/228. The regional offices are in Bangkok, Entebbe (Uganda), Geneva, Goma (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Nairobi, Santiago and Vienna, and are each served by a dedicated regional ombudsman. The ombudsmen for the funds and programmes and for UNHCR provide services to their global constituencies from New York and Geneva, respectively.

10. The Office's decentralized regional presence ensures that staff members at all duty stations have easy access to timely, in-person services to facilitate early resolution through informal intervention. Visits to field offices and in-person contact with the staff members serving in challenging environments allow first-hand assessment of the causes of disputes and conflicts in the workplace. The visits are always accompanied with conflict-competency training otherwise unavailable in those locations. During the reporting period, the regional branches reached staff members serving in, among other duty stations, the Central African Republic, Colombia, the Darfur region of the Sudan, Mali and all the offices in South Sudan. Each regional office is headed by a regional ombudsman reporting to the United Nations Ombudsman and independent of the United Nations entities in their respective regions.

11. It is worth noting that a large majority of the case intake for the Office comes from staff members working at offices away from headquarters and field missions.

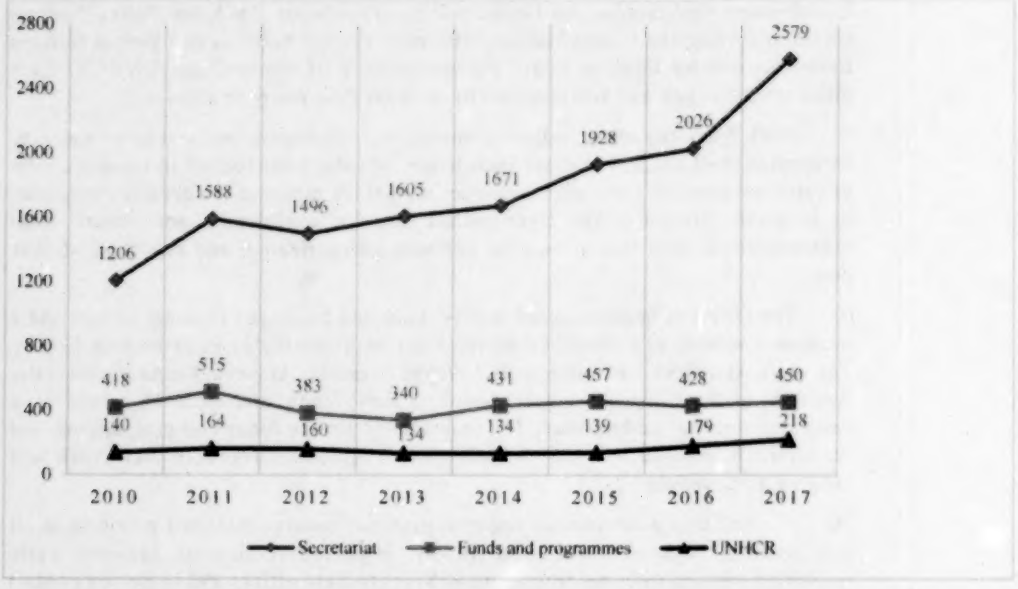
12. Regional ombudsmen and mediators perform both ombudsman and mediation services, offering a high level of efficiency.

III. Statistical overview of cases and trends

A. Case volume and trends

13. The Office opened a total of 3,247 cases[1] in 2017, an increase of 23 per cent over the previous year. Of those cases, 2,579 (80 per cent) originated in the Secretariat, 450 (14 per cent) in the funds and programmes and 218 (7 per cent) in UNHCR (see figure I). In the Secretariat, an overall upward trend in case volume has been observed over the last eight years. The funds and programmes and UNHCR have maintained a relatively steady case volume during the same period; however, 2017 saw a 22 per cent increase in cases at UNHCR, largely due to increased outreach, additional support in Budapest and increasing pressures within the Organization.

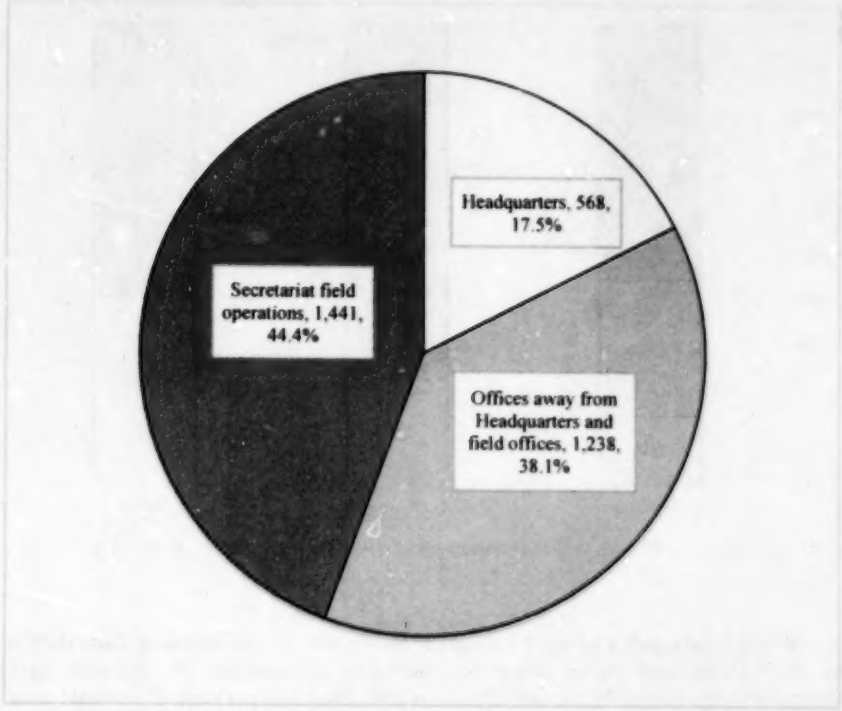
Figure I
Number of cases opened, Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services, 2010–2017



14. In 2017, 82.5 per cent (2,679) of cases across the Office emanated from offices away from headquarters (country and field offices, Secretariat peacekeeping and political missions and others), while 17.5 per cent (568) were from headquarters locations (see figure II).

[1] Cases include all types of interventions, including mediation.

Figure II
Distribution of cases by location, Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services, 2017

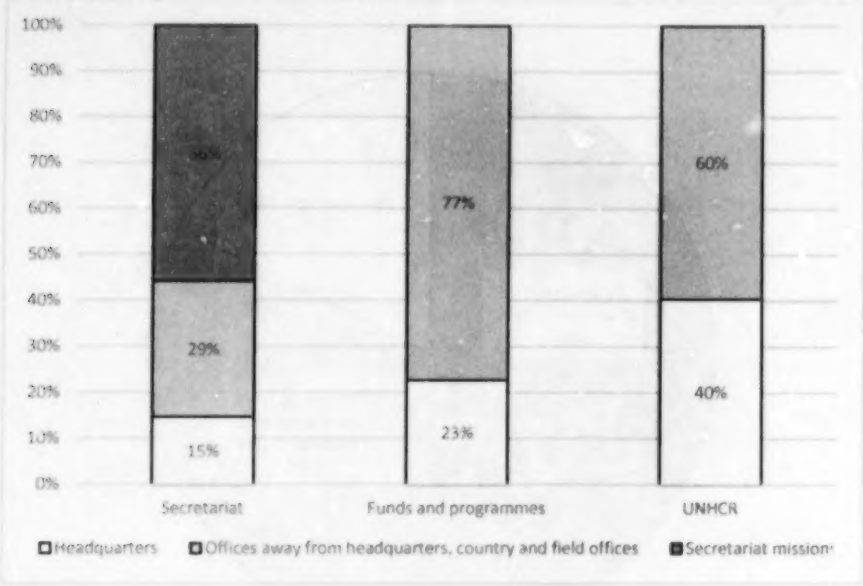

Headquarters, 568, 17.5%
Secretariat field operations, 1,441, 44.4%
Offices away from Headquarters and field offices, 1,238, 38.1%

15. In 2017, for the Secretariat, 15 per cent (378) of cases were reported by staff at Headquarters, 29 per cent (760) from offices away from Headquarters and 56 per cent (1,441) from field operations (see figure III).[2]

16. For the funds and programmes, in 2017, 23 per cent (102) of cases were from headquarters, while 77 per cent (348) emanated from the country offices. During the same reporting period, 40 per cent (88) of the UNHCR cases were from headquarters, while 60 per cent (130) were from the field offices (see figure III).

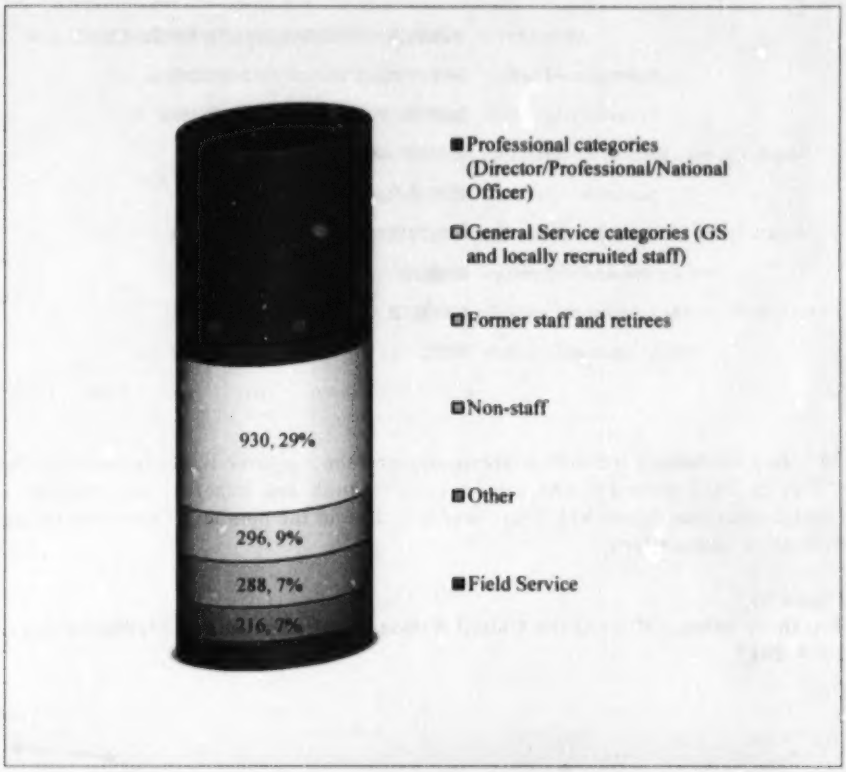
[2] Headquarters offices are: New York (Secretariat); New York and Copenhagen (funds and programmes); and Geneva and Budapest (UNHCR). Offices away from headquarters are: various field offices for the Secretariat, the funds and programmes and UNHCR. Field operations are peacekeeping and special political missions of the Secretariat.

Figure III
Distribution of cases by location and by pillar, Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services, 2017



17. Of the total number of cases brought to the Office, 42 per cent were from staff in the Professional and higher categories, including international Professional staff, National Professional Officers and Directors and above; 29 per cent of the total were from the General Service and related categories, including locally recruited staff; 5 per cent were from Field Service staff; and 9 per cent were from former staff and retirees (see figure IV). While this is largely consistent with the previous reporting period, there was an increase in the use of the Office by former staff and retirees (from 6.5 per cent of total cases in 2016 to 9 per cent in 2017), largely in relation to payments of entitlements and compensation raised by former national staff.

Figure IV
Distribution of cases by occupational group, Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services, 2017

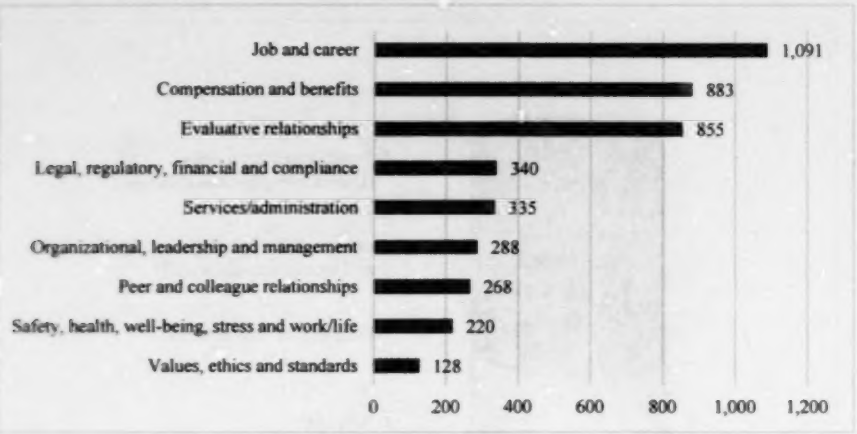


18. During the reporting period, 9 per cent (288) of cases across the Office emanated from categories of non-staff personnel.

B. Issues and trends

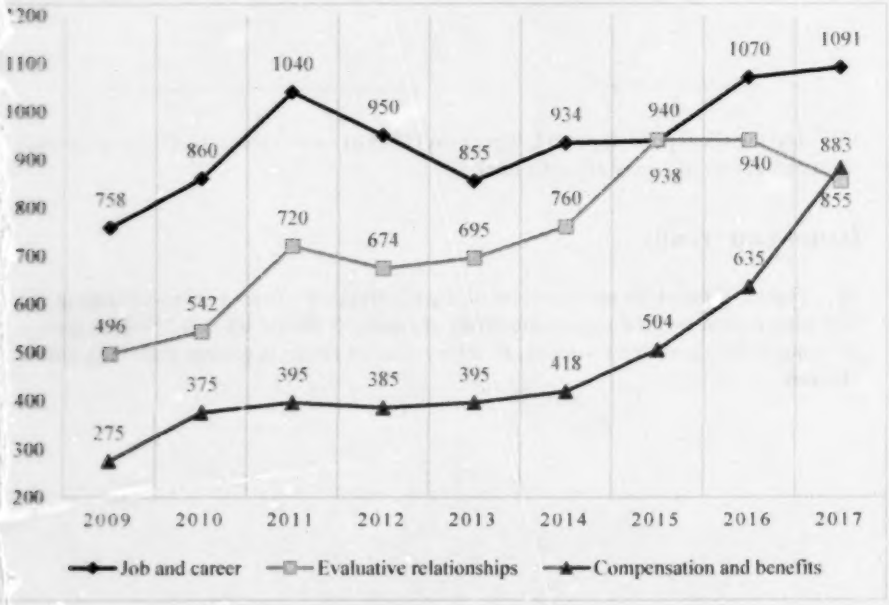
19. Figure V provides an overview of the distribution of cases received during the reporting period by nine major categories of issues. It should be noted that a case can have multiple issues or sub-issues, so the number of issues is greater than the number of cases.

Figure V
Breakdown of all issues brought to the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services, 2017



20. In a continuing trend from previous years, the top three issues reported to the Office in 2017 were job and career; compensation and benefits; and evaluative relationships (see figure VI). There was a decline in the number of cases regarding evaluative relationships.

Figure VI
Top three issues, Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services, 2009–2017



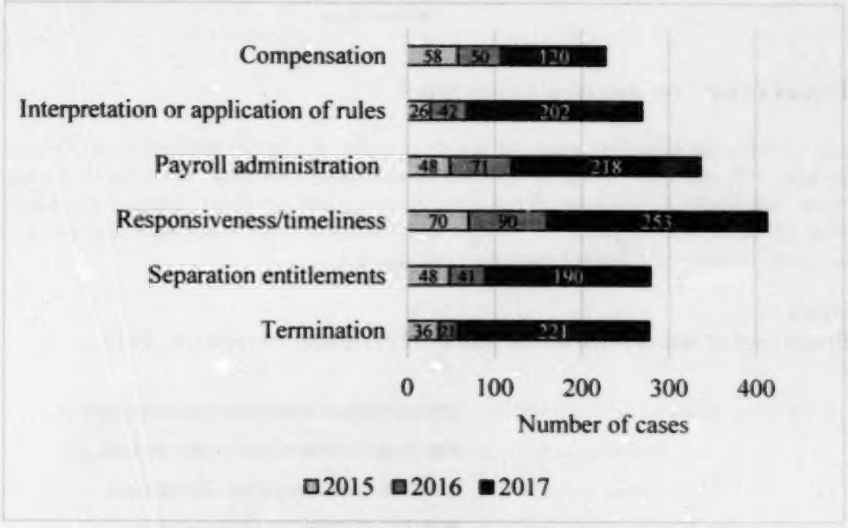
21. In addition to the top three issues, staff members come to the Office with other important concerns which can have a profound impact on staff well-being, as will be discussed in chapter V (see table). In the Secretariat, there were upward trends in a

number of sub-issues connected with service delivery, organizational values and restructuring (figure VII).

Other issues brought forward, Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services, 2017

Issue	*Percentage of cases*	*Number of cases*
Services/administration	10	305
Legal, regulatory, financial and compliance	6	248
Organizational, leadership and management	7	229
Peer and colleague relationships	6	206
Safety, health, well-being, stress and work/life	6	198
Total	**35**	**1 186**

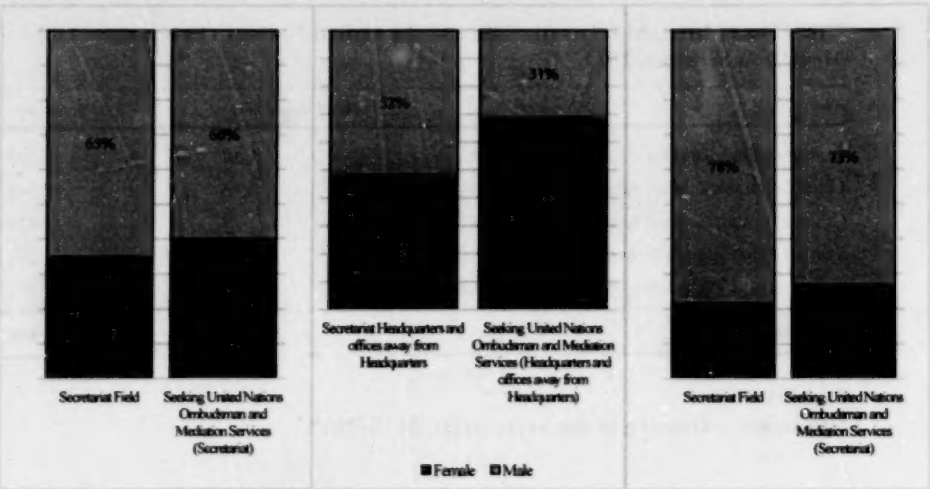
Figure VII
Sub-issues increasing in the Secretariat, 2015–2017



C. Utilization rates in the Secretariat

22. Using the latest demographic figures available (from A/72/123), figure VIII shows that male staff members are less likely than their female counterparts to use the services of the Office, as compared with their population overall across the Secretariat, in non-field duty stations and in the field.

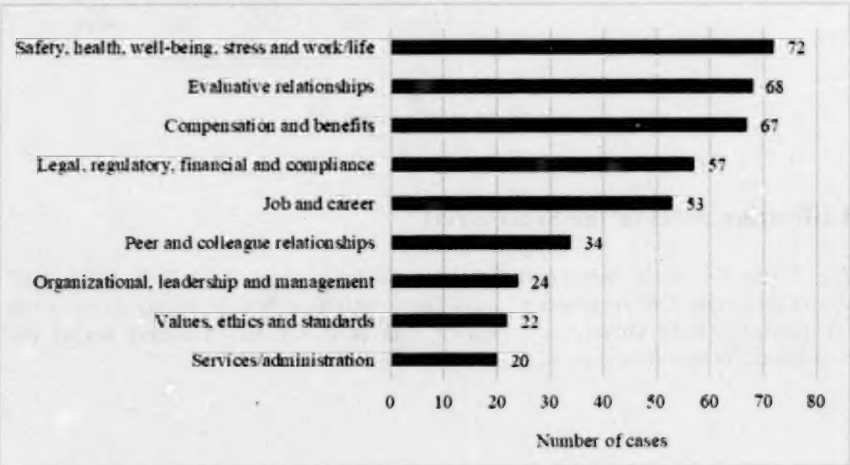
Figure VIII
Gender by location and utilization rate, Secretariat, 2017



D. Issues raised by non-staff personnel

23. During the reporting year, the top three areas of conflict brought to the Office by non-staff personnel were: compensation and benefits; safety, health, well-being, stress and work/life balance; and evaluative relationships. These together represent over 225 cases (see figure IX). Access to informal conflict-resolution services for non-staff personnel is further discussed in chapter 8.

Figure IX
Breakdown of issues reported by non-staff personnel, Secretariat, 2017



IV. Mediation services

A. Programmatic activities

24. The renewed emphasis by the Secretary-General on mediation as a valuable tool for preventing and tackling global challenges has given impetus to workplace mediation and highlighted important parallels between peacemaking efforts around the globe and conflict-resolution efforts within the Organization. Commitment to peace and dialogue, compassion, civility, engagement and respect across divides are not only crucial on the world scene, they are also vital in the quest for peaceful resolution of workplace disputes.

25. In that spirit, mediators and ombudsmen across the three pillars intensified efforts in conflict-competence training and team-building to further promote entente among the staff and empower them to manage conflict constructively. Concerted efforts were also exerted to facilitate dialogue between parties in dispute and transform challenging situations into ones of mutual understanding, including outside the structure of classic mediation.

26. The case volume in mediation is consistent with the steady increase since 2009. Moreover, the resolution rate of cases mediated remained high, as shown in the statistical section below.

B. Mediation training and outreach

27. During the reporting period, the Office continued to work on communication materials that support general prevention efforts. A mediation video was developed and launched (in English, French and Spanish) to raise awareness about the added value and availability of mediation for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

28. Among ongoing activities to refresh skills and deliver excellent mediation services, the Office sought the services of instructors from the Harvard Negotiation Institute to conduct an advanced specialized mediation training programme for all mediators and ombudsmen, including newly recruited case officers. Participants gained skills in impasse-breaking techniques, addressing ethical issues in mediation, and how the mediator can impact the process of conflict resolution and bringing peace into the room.

C. Capacity-building for managers

29. Across the three pillars, outreach activities were conducted around the world through face-to-face meetings or via video- and teleconferencing. In the Secretariat, in addition to missions conducted by the regional ombudsmen in their respective regions, the Mediation Service staffed activities in peacekeeping missions (including in a mission's leadership retreat), conducted workshops and worked with new Office staff in the region.

30. Field visits, including engagement with teams, are considered vitally important to raise awareness of the benefits of mediation, build skills in conflict competence and support and empower managers to participate effectively in mediation and/or encourage recourse thereto when needed.

31. In the spirit of further promoting a culture of respectful treatment and strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of workplace disputes and conflict prevention, it is recommended that leaders across the Organization continue to encourage recourse to mediation — and informal resolution more

broadly — to help bridge divides, promote dialogue among parties in dispute and maintain a harmonious workplace.

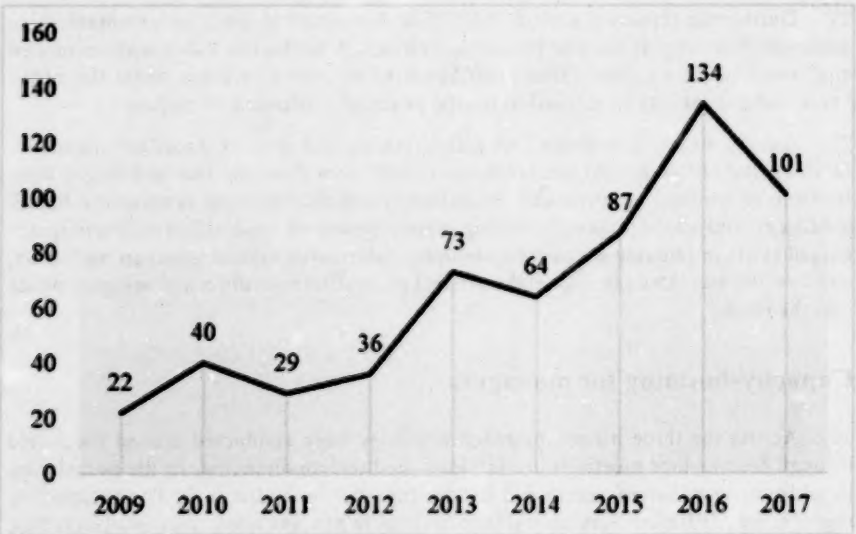
32. The Mediation Service supports access to mediation and informed decision-making by all participants addressing workplace conflicts. In the coming year, the Office will continue to collaborate with the formal administration of justice system, including the Management Evaluation Unit and the Tribunals, to explore opportunities for proactive routing of cases to mediation, while respecting the voluntary nature of participation.

D. Statistical overview of mediation cases

33. In paragraph 16 of its resolution 72/256, the General Assembly welcomed with appreciation the high resolution rate of cases mediated and encouraged the Office to continue its efforts in informal dispute resolution. The Assembly requested detailed information on the activities of the Office, including statistical overviews of mediated cases.

34. During the reporting period, 101 mediation cases, including 5 group processes, were opened. Of those, 56 emanated from the Secretariat, 32 from the funds and programmes and 13 from UNHCR (see figure X for the number of mediation cases opened since 2009).

Figure X
Number of mediation cases opened, 2009–2017



35. While the number of mediation cases may appear to have declined from 2016 (134) to 2017 (101) it is important to note that the 2016 figures included 53 individual orders of referral for mediation by the United Nations Dispute Tribunal, all relating to similar issues triggered by a policy decision in the same peacekeeping mission. This large referral of similar cases, if combined as a group case, would show the 2016 mediation caseload as 82 and the 2017 figure consistent with previous trends.

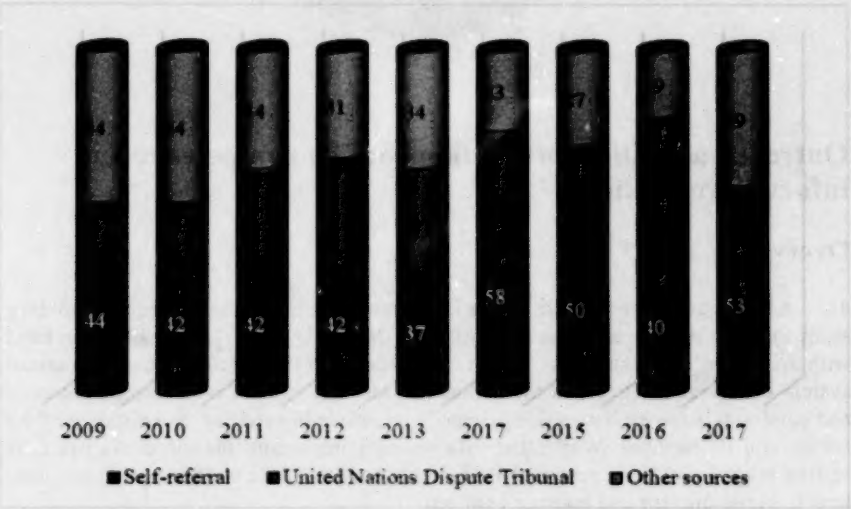
36. Group processes, which are documented as a single mediation case for each group, may include a variety of components that support team cohesion, boost team

morale and address interpersonal or structural issues to help the team to achieve its full potential.

37. Of the five group processes conducted by the Office, four were conducted by the Mediation Service in the Secretariat and one in the funds and programmes. They included work with over 90 staff members, the largest group being 26 people and the smallest being 7.

38. For mediation cases in the Secretariat, the funds and programmes and UNHCR, 7.9 per cent (8 cases) were referred by the Dispute Tribunal, 53.5 per cent (54 cases) were self-referrals (i.e., the party or parties requested a mediation) and the remainder (38.6 per cent, or 39 cases) were referred to mediation by other offices (the Office of Staff Legal Assistance, the Management Evaluation Unit, the administration and staff representatives, among others). The sources of referral for mediation cases during the period from 2009 to 2017 are shown in figure XI. Self-referrals continue to represent the highest group of mediated cases.

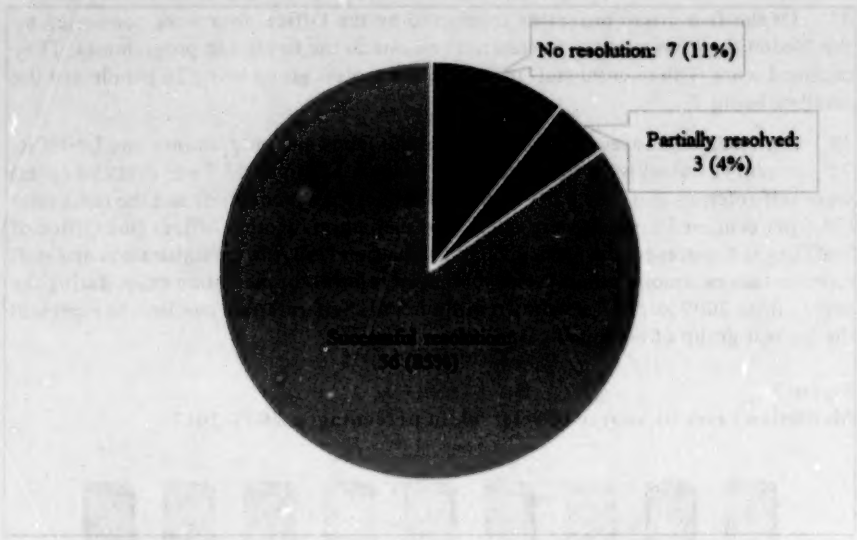
Figure XI
Mediation cases by source of referral, in percentages, 2009–2017



39. General trends of issues mediated are in line with previous years, with predominant concerns in job and career; evaluative and peer relationships; and compensation and benefits.

40. Consistent with previous reports, the resolution rate of cases mediated and closed across the Office has remained high, with 89.7 per cent of mediated cases in 2017 resulting in a successful outcome in the Secretariat, and a successful resolution rate of 84.9 per cent across all three pillars (see figure XII). Of the 101 cases opened in 2017, 66 were mediated and closed and in 56 of those a resolution was reached. Seven cases were closed with no resolution and 3 were partially resolved. Nine cases could not proceed to mediation because one of the parties declined to mediate. Six cases were not appropriate for mediation and four cases were resolved before mediation. A total of 16 cases remained open.

Figure XII
Outcome of mediated cases across the three pillars, 2017



V. Outreach activities: promoting conflict competence and informal resolution

Overview

41. A key strategic goal of the Office is to promote conflict competence by building skills to better prevent and resolve conflict in the workplace. This goes hand in hand with the Office's core mandate. In the initial years after the introduction of the current system of internal justice and the expanded informal system, the focus of outreach and communication activities was primarily on informing staff of the existence of the Office and its services. While that task remains important, the emphasis has now shifted toward providing practical skills, tools and insight to staff and managers into how to better prevent and manage conflict.

42. Currently, there are seven established regional ombudsman's offices, two of which are dedicated to assisting staff in peacekeeping missions. The Office maintains an extensive programme of outreach visits, supplementing the field presence by bringing informal conflict-resolution and mediation services closer to staff and managers. The Office initiated a pilot project in Beirut beginning October 2017 to explore the most effective means of serving the Middle East and North Africa, within existing resources.

43. Whether at Headquarters, in a regional office or on mission, each mediator and ombudsman is involved in developing activities that help staff members to understand the nature of workplace conflict and use informal methods to resolve it. The focus is on building skills and providing practical tools that staff members can use every day to prevent or resolve conflict.

44. To support its key functions, the Office has developed numerous communication tools and activities. The Office's principal communication platform, its multilingual website (www.un.org/ombudsman), remains an important gateway for staff seeking

in-depth information on the Office's role and services, including a series of key documents, online resources and access to all annual reports.

45. In 2017, the Secretariat Ombudsman marked its fifteenth-year anniversary by intensifying its delivery of conflict-resolution focused activities. These included an estimated 440 outreach activities within the Secretariat globally, including over 90 workshops, 70 information sessions and presentations, panel discussions, town hall meetings and skill-building activities, and over 260 meetings with senior officials, or partnership consultations with internal or external stakeholder groups. Additionally, an expert panel, held in partnership and association with the Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations addressed the theme "Making peace: mediation and justice in action".

46. To overcome the challenge of limited physical presence, remote channels such as email, telephone and online video teleconferencing are often used by the Office in making its services, including case intervention, available in most field locations. However, difficult conditions in the field, including weak information technology systems, unstable Internet service, power disruptions and other logistical constraints continue to present considerable challenges, making in-person intervention by far the most desirable means of early conflict resolution.

47. Each mission includes: one-on-one consultations with staff members; information sessions or town hall meetings; focus groups; and briefings with senior officials, stakeholders, local support resources and staff representatives.

48. Some missions were coordinated with other offices, including the Department of Field Support and the Office of Staff Legal Assistance, to provide comprehensive assistance to staff undergoing downsizing. This recommended practice provided a comprehensive service to staff members and an efficient implementation for visiting service providers and mission hosts.

49. In paragraph 18 of its resolution 72/256, the General Assembly encouraged the Office to intensify its outreach activities. In paragraph 19 of the resolution, the Assembly recognized the efforts of the Office aimed at the informal resolution of conflict and requested more detailed information on the impact of conflict prevention training and on efforts to further enhance cooperation between the informal and formal parts of the system of administration of justice.

50. In 2017, feedback survey results from participants revealed a high level of satisfaction with the workshops and information sessions, and 90 per cent of respondents to the feedback questionnaire stated that they would recommend the session to others. The multilingual website was visited on average 3,000 times per month.

51. The Office has strengthened the design and implementation of pre-intervention surveys, which are conducted prior to visits to field offices or peacekeeping missions. The survey aims to initiate dialogue, identify the main workplace issues and gauge the level of awareness of staff of informal conflict resolution. Additionally, conducting a survey prior to a conflict resolution mission can detect ongoing workplace conflicts, prevalent issues and the time spent on dealing with them. That information is helpful for designing relevant training workshops and outreach materials and providing customized responses to staff needs. In 2017, the confidential and anonymous pre-intervention survey was sent to 24 Secretariat offices, departments and missions located in 26 countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia.

52. The Office will continue working towards providing more detailed data on the impact of its conflict prevention training efforts in its next report.

VI. Root causes of conflict: systemic issues

A. Background

53. Office interaction with stakeholders enables the Office to identify, analyse and report on systemic issues occurring or emerging in the Organization. While individual cases can be resolved through direct intervention, many conflicts can be traced to systemic issues such as gaps or inconsistencies in the Organization's policies, procedures, systems or structures. These may be deeply rooted in the organizational culture or the result of a misalignment of purpose, goal and implementation. The Office's early detection of these issues allows the Organization to respond in a holistic way that can address current and prevent future conflicts.

B. Introduction

54. In the 2017 report (A/72/138), the Ombudsman observed several factors affecting staff productivity, health and morale, leading to unproductive and inappropriately expressed conflict. Recently, the Organization had to contend with allegations of harassment and abuse, including in the press.

55. From a systemic perspective, extreme occurrences do not happen in a vacuum: there is a lead-up and escalation when prevention and early warning systems have failed or are ignored. A general fear of speaking up, as the Ombudsman has noted previously, leads to a possible underreporting of risk and incidents that likely could have been prevented had there been an atmosphere of trust, listening and support.

56. The present report focuses on systemic issues contributing to inappropriate behaviour that may not meet the definition of misconduct but is inconsistent with the values of the Organization and the standards of conduct required of international civil servants.[3] A workplace where colleagues and supervisors are respectful of diversity, attentive to the dignity of all and use an appropriate, civil tone, describes an environment consistent with the values of the United Nations. A work environment where staff and managers become abrasive, matters escalate towards harassment, abuse of power, intimidation or retaliation, are an offence to those same values.

57. This may lead to unhealthy conflict and undue stress, which, in turn, may lead to staff disengagement and cynicism and become a risk to organizational reputation and productivity. The opportunities described in each section below include what the Office hears from both staff members and managers on the actions each would like to see from the other for the attainment of a harmonious workplace.

C. Performance management and accountability

58. In the 2017 report (A/72/138), the Ombudsman reported on the centrality of performance management, behaviour management and accountability, in a 15-year overview of the work of the Office. The report highlighted the need for staff and managers to have the necessary, sometimes difficult, conversations in a helpful, productive manner (paras. 59, 60 and 69). The findings from the cases handled in the reporting period are consistent with previous observations.

59. Under the Organization's regulations, rules and policies, any form of harassment, including sexual harassment, discrimination and abuse of authority is

[3] International Civil Service Commission, Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service (New York, 2013). Available from https://icsc.un.org/resources/pdfs/general/standardsE.pdf.

prohibited, as is any other type of misconduct. Where established through a proper process, perpetrators may face disciplinary action or even prosecution in national jurisdictions.

60. While the above may address egregious transgressions supported with ample evidence, the Ombudsman notes an organizational weakness with regard to addressing inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour that falls short of the definition of misconduct. This may include unfair or unsubstantiated accusations of underperformance; using the threat of filing an unfounded harassment complaint to gain advantage; pushback when underperformance is appropriately addressed; inappropriate, disrespectful, abrasive, inconsiderate, objectionable, rude or attacking behaviour; or stress- and tension-inducing behaviour that, while perhaps understandable in context, may make other staff feel uncomfortable, intimidated or excluded. At times, these may even lead to stress-induced sick leave.

61. Other infractions or microaggressions can also be hurtful or disrespectful to individuals and cumulatively damaging, leading to a toxic work environment that falls short of the organizational expectation of a harmonious, productive workplace. Such behaviour is inconsistent with the requirement of all staff to exhibit the core values and competencies of the Organization, with additional requirements placed on managers (see ST/SGB/1999/15).

62. When managers fail to act, or deny that there is a problem, the absence of consequences for poor behaviour is perceived by all involved as a culture of impunity. A healthy work environment is unsustainable when meeting deadlines or "getting things done" is rewarded at the expense of staff well-being or team motivation. Unless there are consequences for this costly kind of "success", the culture will not change. On the contrary, the Ombudsman observed that this approach has kept managers from paying adequate attention to the needs and well-being of their staff. A caring management approach may be more effective and sustainable in the long term, and more consistent with organizational values.

63. Many managers avoid a difficult conversation that could address an issue early on, often to the detriment of the staff impacted by the behaviour concerned. Without staff being made aware of the issue, there is no opportunity to correct it, and this cycle of inaction allows problems to grow, fester and escalate.

64. Having the skills and resources to balance an adherence to rules, policies and procedures with respectful, harmonious behaviour and communication is critical to effective performance management. Currently, there is a risk that this divergence of values and practice will challenge the ability of staff working together at the United Nations to fulfil their mandates to improve the lives of the beneficiaries of the Organization.

65. Finally, where the objectionable behaviour occurred at senior levels, it had a broader negative impact on the overall workplace than when similar behaviour emanated from more junior levels.

Observation on organizational initiatives

66. The Secretariat has continued to undertake improvements to the performance management and development system and is now developing an approach that incorporates the promotion of behavioural change, especially regarding the need for ongoing feedback between managers and staff. These changes are aimed at shaping organizational culture and increasing accountability for the management of the Organization's most important asset: its staff. The introduction of a new leadership and management model is envisaged, towards the end of 2018, including raising

awareness of unconscious bias, offering mentoring opportunities to staff at large and promoting a positive change to organizational culture.

Opportunities

(1) **Model exemplary behaviour**

(a) Deal decisively and early with inappropriate behaviour, even when it does not reach the level of prohibited conduct; speak up against any offensive behaviour perpetrated against themselves or colleagues;

(b) Set the "tone from the top" and address uncivil behaviour swiftly, proportionately and fairly, across the board, before it can escalate to a formal complaint;

(c) Supervisees and supervisors must co-create continuous dialogue;

(d) Focus on the dignity of all concerned and on a harmonious work environment free of abrasive, offensive and hurtful behaviour;

(e) Leadership must act promptly when organizational values are impinged — a formal complaint should not be seen as a prerequisite for management action;

(f) Pay special attention to the performance evaluations of staff facing a downsizing exercise to ensure that behaviour and treatment of others is evaluated when making retention decisions;

(g) Be empathetic, and judge behaviour not people. Recognize that staff members at all levels who appear abrasive may be under intense pressure and will need support.

(2) **Accountability**

(a) Note that good behaviour is integral to good performance. Hold all staff, including the most senior, accountable for how they treat others, especially those under their direct or indirect supervision;

(b) Impose appropriate consequences, and correct negative incentives.

(3) **Training and support**

(a) Continue to provide training and support to managers to use the performance management system fairly and appropriately to reinforce core values and behavioural competencies of staff;

(b) Develop the skills of staff, leadership and managers to initiate conversations about behaviour promptly as issues arise;

(c) Ensure staff are aware of and can freely access recourse and support resources to deal with any perceived or real offensive behaviour at an early stage, without any fear that management would retaliate.

D. Quality of service

67. Many issues raised related to the quality and timeliness of service, including simply receiving a response to inquiries (see figure V). These cases were often associated with high levels of frustration. The damage caused by poor service delivery, followed by delays and lack of commitment or engagement to rectify the situation, can far exceed the original problem, as once poor service delivery leads a staff member or manager to feel improperly treated or disrespected, trust in the system and in management erodes. With diminishing trust, conflicts easily occur.

68. The Office has observed the profound negative impact on behaviour, morale, engagement and productivity when whole teams spiral down, with attendant absences and mental health issues. Some of those expected to deliver services work in underresourced and under-managed environments, unable to attain the level of service expected and thus feel victimized themselves. The Ombudsman works with the various parties, offices and departments involved to address these issues on a practical, specific level as confidentiality permits.

69. The Ombudsman has observed a concern that delegation of authority to the field could result in abuse of authority, if there is less or no oversight by headquarters. There appears to be limited awareness that the reform proposals repeatedly mention that delegation will occur only with the appropriate training, monitoring and accountability. Another possible explanation is that staff feel that management may not fully appreciate the extent of abuse seen, perceived or feared by them. An inability to foster trust with staff and assure them of protection against abusive behaviour or inappropriate decisions in the field may hinder meaningful discussions regarding optimal delegation of authority for service delivery.

Observation on organizational initiatives

70. The Ombudsman recognizes the Organization's attempts to capitalize on the introduction of an enterprise resource planning system (Umoja), and that it is preparing for large-scale reforms to address the issue of global consistency and promptness of service in administration. This may alleviate some of the concerns raised in the medium and long term. Until such reforms have been successfully implemented, the Organization may wish to pay immediate attention to both the staff problems associated with service delivery shortcomings and the legitimate difficulties of staff in delivering the services requested.

71. In this connection, simply pushing high-performing staff harder to deliver on departmental commitments, without adequate support is not an acceptable solution as this has led to staff becoming unwell — sometimes seriously so — when delivery pressures were delegated downwards without the necessary managerial support.

Opportunities

(1) **Accountability**

(a) Be an effective role model, regardless of level; everyone contributes to organizational culture;

(b) Model client orientation, teamwork and professionalism; systematically ask for feedback after delivering services to internal clients;

(c) Act on unusual or inappropriate office behaviour and encourage the reporting of abuse of delegated authority to headquarters;

(d) Do not incentivize avoidance of poor behaviour by allowing the situation to persist;

(e) Explore and introduce innovative ways to better perform tasks and deliver services more effectively.

(2) **Communication**

(a) Send the message to all staff that management wants to hear, will listen and will act when their support is needed; promptly inform staff when capacity constraints will hamper service delivery, informing them of when they can expect a response;

(b) Speak up (whether supervisor or supervisee) and request support when conditions do not allow expected performance or timeliness, without putting staff under undue stress;

(c) Acknowledge and reward managers who care for their staff and staff who contribute to a harmonious workplace.

(3) **Alignment**

(a) Realistically align resources to tasks, distribute work fairly and hold team members accountable for their share of the work;

(b) Support supervisees when they take the right but difficult decisions.

E. Reform implementation and change management

72. The Ombudsman has previously reported on reform fatigue and the lack of change management and adequate communication strategies (A/72/138). These concerns continue to gain importance, as they often present as the backdrop or root cause of the specific issues brought to the Office.

73. While the need for change is accepted, constant, sometimes large-scale, transformational reforms (where one begins before the previous has been brought to fruition) can have a destabilizing effect on some staff, in particular where there are long transition periods. This may be a contributing factor to some of the negative results in the staff engagement survey (see para. 75 below). This sense of destabilization and the resulting stress and cynicism is fertile ground for poor, defensive and even aggressive behaviour, contributing to an increase in incivility.

Observation on organizational initiatives

74. There have been considerable efforts made at communicating the reform initiatives to staff, including global town halls and briefings to the Staff Management Committee. Also, mitigating measures have been devised for those who may be negatively impacted by impending reforms. However, despite all these efforts, there remains a pervasive sense of uncertainty and insecurity that impacts behaviour, office culture and the well-being of staff. Many, including senior staff, justifiably or not, feel that available information is withheld for no good reason. Staff at all levels have complained about the lack of information-sharing in recent and current reform processes.

Opportunities

(1) **Preparation**

(a) Request that the change management efforts be properly resourced for optimal effectiveness and identify to the relevant bodies the cost and resource implications so that investment will be commensurate with the need for and scale of the reforms;

(b) Explore and be aware at all levels of options, alternative career paths and mitigating measures. While it is not intended to shift the burden for change management to individual staff, research has shown that, where individuals engage in shaping their future, they feel less stressed, less helpless and more dignified;

(c) Continue to engage in the staff-management process and the work with elected staff representatives towards shaping the future of work in the *Organization*;

(d) Acknowledge that change is difficult and attend to self-care, including by using the services of staff counsellors for resilience and stress management.

(2) **Communication**

(a) Continue the communication efforts already under way, even when it may seem repetitive;

(b) Explore what may account for the gap between the considerable efforts made by management and the perception that there may not be sufficient communication;

(c) Develop an internal communication strategy and communicate early, even in the absence of concrete information, to help staff at large know the plan and the timing of decisions to follow;

(d) Reassure staff that the change-management governance structure to lead, oversee and accompany any wide-ranging reforms and changes that will impact many staff and various offices across the global Secretariat is in place and ready;

(e) Create even more opportunities to engage staff in dialogue, in addition to more unidirectional information and briefing sessions;

(f) Monitor whether and how the considerable efforts already made are received and processed by staff ("check in").

(3) **Training and support**

Educate staff and managers as early as possible on transition management for themselves and for coaching supervisees.

VII. Observations on organizational initiatives

A. United Nations Staff Engagement Survey

75. In paragraph 17 of its resolution 72/256, the General Assembly requested that the report of the Ombudsman include information and recommendations on the overall results of the staff survey as they relate to staff perceptions of workplace conflict.

76. The Ombudsman is pleased to note that the first United Nations Staff Engagement Survey took place from 4 to 18 December 2017.

77. While there are many important findings in the Survey, both positive and less positive, the Ombudsman notes, in the context of this report, the finding of an imbalance between the ongoing budget cuts faced by many entities and the requirement of managers to create an enabling, empowering environment. What is presented as mandated managerial action feels to some managers like immense pressure on them to shoulder an impossible burden. The budget cuts create additional stress on the staff who remain following cuts or post freezes. Consequently, managers find it difficult to reconcile the welcomed mandate to create an enabling environment with the reduced resources and unchanged expectations to produce.

Opportunity

78. Address the need for adequate support and an enabling environment for staff in times of budget cuts to enable them to perform effectively.

B. Mental health

79. The constant changes and uncertainties experienced across the Secretariat and the larger systems of which it is a part have put significant sectors of the Organization in a psychological "survival mode", with the attendant lack of empathy that this defensive mode carries with it. It appears that this is taking a toll on the well-being and mental health of all affected, whether they experience such stress directly, or are on the receiving end of the resulting poor behaviour.[4]

80. In this respect, the Ombudsman is pleased to note that the Secretary-General is committed to working with partners to promote full mental health and well-being for staff in the United Nations system. It is through this commitment that, for the first time, the United Nations system has developed a mental health and well-being strategy for its workplace. The United Nations Workplace Mental Health and Well-being Strategy, which is a five-year strategy, has been created for all staff, across diverse roles, contexts and environments, from field missions to Headquarters, with the purpose of increasing the effectiveness of the Organization by optimizing the psychological health of its personnel.

81. The Strategy was developed by a collaborative multi-disciplinary, multi-agency team in response to the findings of the United Nations staff well-being survey, which identified elevated levels of symptoms consistent with anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress and hazardous drinking in United Nations personnel. The four key themes of the five-year workplace mental health plan are to: (a) create a workplace that enhances mental and physical health and well-being; (b) develop, deliver and continuously evaluate mental health and well-being services in all duty stations; (c) welcome and support staff who live with mental health challenges; and (d) ensure sustainable funding for mental health and well-being services.

82. It is anticipated that the implementation of the Strategy will commence in the fourth quarter of 2018, on the basis of the four themes, with multidisciplinary inter-agency working groups to assist in the co-design of specific elements for implementation.

83. It is recognized, however, that a mental health strategy by itself cannot solve all workplace-related issues in the Secretariat, nor is it intended to inappropriately "medicalize" situations where managerial solutions are required. All the opportunities listed above, however, are additional ways to support the first prong of the strategy.

Opportunity

84. Continue to destigmatize and increase understanding of the impact of mental health and stress on sick leave and productivity as this can go a long way to promoting a harmonious, supportive workplace where people feel respected and able to do their best.

C. G to P career progression

85. Beyond the focus of the present report, the Ombudsman remains concerned about the career prospects of staff members in the General Service and related categories, in the light of the cases received. The Ombudsman is pleased to note that the working group on the career development of these staff members has been reviewing relevant issues within the United Nations Secretariat. Recommendations

[4] See A/61/524, para. 67; A/62/311, para. 52; A/64/314, paras. 86–91; A/65/303, paras. 91–97; A/66/224, paras. 87 and 90–92; A/67/172, paras. 91–93; A/70/151, para. 67; A/71/157, paras. 58 and 59.

that would require the approval of the General Assembly have been developed jointly by the working group.

VIII. Looking ahead

86. The systemic analysis of issues brought to the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services is the basis on which the Office acts as an early warning system, drawing the attention of those involved in policy- and decision-making to the desirability of addressing emerging trends or those not adequately addressed.

87. The report of the work of the Office in 2014 signalled the damaging effects of offensive behaviour in the workplace and contained a suggestion that the Secretary-General may wish to reiterate the importance of civil and respectful behaviour in the workplace and ... expects senior managers to set the tone and be role models in that regard (see A/70/151, para. 70 (a)). Since then, it has become much clearer, not only in the United Nations but in the global workplace, that offensive behaviour has a damaging effect not only on staff morale and well-being at all levels but also on productivity. In the light of the Secretary-General's reform agenda and at a time when the United Nations must do more with less, the Office sees that it has an important role in helping to ensure that the United Nations workplace is one where the dignity of all is respected.

88. The Office plans to play a significant role in a civility or dignity initiative that will focus on how managers and staff working together in a mutually respectful manner can achieve goals more efficiently while modelling and strengthening robust team spirit. While maintaining its hallmark guarantee of confidentiality (except in cases where, in accordance with the standards of practice, the Ombudsman has good reason to believe that there is the possibility of imminent bodily harm), the Office will include in its work particular attention to the systemic issues arising from a lack of civility or a failure to respect the dignity of colleagues. The Secretariat Ombudsman will cooperate with the other two pillars of the Office to ensure a unified approach to addressing the issue. It will also seek input from others in the Organization, including management and staff representatives, through dialogue on the root causes and manifestations of lack of civility or failure to ensure dignity in the workplace. Acting as a catalyst from its unique vantage point and remaining independent, the Office expects this work to assist at Headquarters and in the field.

89. The Ombudsman notes that the Office is not mandated to serve non-staff personnel and does so only on an exceptional basis and when feasible within existing resources. In 2017, the Secretariat received 225 cases of non-staff personnel, compared with 152 cases in 2016, an increase of 73 cases, or about 48 per cent. There were 161 non-staff personnel cases in 2015. Recognizing the trend towards engaging an increasing number of non-staff personnel in the workforce of the Organization, especially in the field missions, the Secretary-General proposes to initiate a pilot project that would offer access to informal dispute-resolution services to non-staff personnel as part of the Office's mandate. Should the pilot project lead to an increase in numbers of cases from non-staff personnel beyond 350 cases per year, the Secretary-General would be required to seek additional resources for the project to continue. The pilot project would assist the Organization in determining the types of grievances that are raised by non-staff personnel and the quantitative caseload.

90. As highlighted in previous reports and recognized by the General Assembly in its resolution 71/266, access to the Office remains a challenge for staff serving in the field, especially those serving in remote duty stations. Through its regional presence, the Office has made significant efforts to expand its reach through outreach missions within the available means. This reporting period saw a 35 per cent increase in cases

over the previous period from Secretariat field missions, and a 22 per cent increase in other Secretariat locations outside of Headquarters. On the basis of experience, the in-person presence of a conflict-resolution specialist, as noted in paragraph 46, remains the most effective approach to conflict intervention, as it allows for preventive action, quick resolutions on the ground and skill-building for the future. Continued focus on staff who serve the United Nations away from headquarters duty stations, under often very harsh conditions, will remain a priority of the Office. This will include ensuring that the resources of the Office are used to deliver accessible and adequate regional coverage, as well as providing services in all six official languages.

United Nations A/73/168

General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 July 2018

Original: English

Seventy-third session
Items 99 (j), (n), and (q) of the preliminary list*
General and complete disarmament

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them, and consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to the requests of the General Assembly contained in its resolutions 72/57 on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, 72/40 on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them and 71/64 on the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures.

In the Secretary-General's new agenda for disarmament, set out in the document entitled "Securing Our Common Future: an Agenda for Disarmament", he underscored the priority of "disarmament that saves lives". The present report highlights the major achievements in that regard of the Third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and those made in the implementation of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, as well as the international cooperation and assistance efforts in support of the implementation of those instruments.

The present report also contains a summary of the activities undertaken during the reporting period by the following mechanisms: Coordinating Action on Small Arms; Group of Interested States for Practical Disarmament Measures; and United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation. Information on recent efforts to support the application of the International Small Arms Control Standards by States and other entities is also included in the report.

* A/73/50.

18-11794 (E) 090818

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 72/57 on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its seventy-third session on the implementation of the resolution.

2. In its resolution 72/40 on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them, the General Assembly invited the Secretary-General and those States and organizations that were in a position to do so to continue to provide assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them. In the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to consider the matter and to report to the Assembly at its seventy-third session on the implementation of the resolution.

3. In its resolution 71/64 on the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its seventy-third session a report on the implementation of practical disarmament measures, taking into consideration the activities of the Group of Interested States for Practical Disarmament Measures.

4. With a view to ensuring a coherent and consistent approach to overlapping and mutually reinforcing issues, the above-mentioned requests are addressed in the present consolidated report.

II. Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament

5. The Secretary-General launched his new agenda for disarmament, as set out in the document entitled "Securing Our Common Future: an Agenda for Disarmament",[1] in Geneva in May 2018. In it, he acknowledged that disarmament was a driving force for international peace and security and a useful tool for ensuring national security. Disarmament and arms regulation contribute to the upholding of the principles of humanity, promote sustainable development and safeguard the protection of civilians in conflict. The agenda has three main priorities: disarmament to save humanity, disarmament that saves lives and disarmament for future generations. It creates a clear and credible vision for sustainable security that serves humanity, draws from the past and builds towards the future.

6. The second priority of the agenda for disarmament, disarmament that saves lives, places human beings at the centre of efforts relating to conventional arms control, including small arms and light weapons. Through the agenda, the United Nations has recommitted to addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, including through the establishment of a new funding mechanism. The Secretary-General will establish a multi-partner trust facility on small arms control within the standing Peacebuilding Fund, which will be open to Member States, United Nations system partners and external stakeholders, such as relevant civil society organizations. It will support comprehensive and integrated approaches to small arms regulation and control.

7. The new facility will create conditions for addressing all relevant dimensions of the problem of illicit small arms. The design of country-specific programmes will prioritize addressing the gaps in current funding and activities. Practical arms control measures, such as weapons collection and destruction, will be combined and reinforced with adequate legal and policy frameworks, institutional arrangements, proper stockpile management, a safer humanitarian space, education and awareness-

[1] Available from www.un.org/disarmament/sg-agenda.

raising, law enforcement measures and capacity-building, including in marking weapons, record-keeping and tracing, and data and evidence collection and analysis. Response measures will be aimed not only at addressing specific problems, but also at changing cultural attitudes and perceptions regarding small arms, including those relating to the gender dimension of the issue.

III. Activities carried out by the United Nations in the implementation of resolutions 72/57, 72/40 and 71/64

A. Third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

8. The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons are universal frameworks for addressing the scourge of illicit flows of small arms and light weapons. Their implementation continues to be a priority for the international community.

9. The Third Review Conference of the Programme of Action was held in New York from 18 to 29 June 2018, with Jean-Claude Brunet (France) as the president of the Conference. The Conference was preceded by a Preparatory Committee, which met for one week in March.

10. The Third Review Conference concluded with the unanimous adoption of a substantive outcome document (A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3). In adopting the outcome document, States renewed their commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument and agreed upon an implementation plan and follow-up process for the period 2018–2024.

11. States highlighted the significant progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, while acknowledging that, nonetheless, implementation remained uneven. States acknowledged that challenges and obstacles, including a lack of resources and differing capacities, must be overcome in order to achieve further progress.

12. States continued to hold divergent views on the scope of the Programme of Action. In a departure from the practice at previous Review Conferences, ammunition was explicitly included in the outcome document, reflecting the growing importance of the issue to many States. They recognized that, in strengthening the implementation of the Programme of Action, those States that applied the provisions of the Programme of Action to small arms and light weapons ammunition could exchange and apply the relevant experiences, lessons learned and best practices acquired within the framework of other relevant instruments. States welcomed the process established under General Assembly resolution 72/55 on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus.

13. States stressed the importance of the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument to the realization of several of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, in particular Goal 16 and target 16.4. In that context, they committed to undertaking steps to ensure complementary assistance with regard to data collection in support of the Sustainable Development Goals and national reporting under the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument. In addition, States identified other actions to

support complementarity, such as coordinating national action plans on small arms with national sustainable development strategies.

14. Significant progress was made on gender-related issues. The outcome document contained strong language on the highly gendered nature of small arms and light weapons. States acknowledged the differing impacts of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons on women, men, girls and boys and the need to reflect and mainstream those considerations into all relevant policies and programmes. States called for the full participation and representation of women in the implementation of the Programme of Action and requested coordination between national authorities responsible for implementation and relevant ministries responsible for women's affairs. The value of data disaggregated by gender was recognized.

15. States explored the issue of the diversion of small arms and light weapons to unauthorized recipients, including terrorists, and the dangers posed by the reactivation of deactivated small arms and light weapons. In a dedicated section of the outcome document, States called for an exchange of best practices to ensure irreversible deactivation or destruction and encouraged the adoption of national measures in that regard. They decided that the next biennial meeting of States in 2020 would consider key challenges and opportunities relating to the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument for the purpose of preventing and combating the diversion and the illicit international transfer of small arms and light weapons to unauthorized recipients.

16. New developments in small arms and light weapons technology and design continued to draw the attention of States. Implications for the International Tracing Instrument of recent developments in manufacturing, technology and design were addressed, as well as potential opportunities and challenges. States requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report, taking into consideration views submitted by States, on associated technological opportunities and challenges. They requested the Secretary-General to consider in particular the challenges posed by polymer and modular weapons and to make recommendations on ways of addressing them, in view of their potential impact on the effective implementation of the International Tracing Instrument.

B. International cooperation and assistance in the framework of the Programme of Action

17. At the Third Review Conference, a representative of the Secretariat delivered a presentation,[2] based on information and data provided by States in their national reports on the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument,[3] on the adequacy of assistance and enhanced funding, providing options for enhanced funding for international assistance and possible sources of improved funding.

18. According to the national reports and the Creditor Reporting System of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development,[4] the amount of international assistance to support implementation of the Programme of Action has decreased. The number of States that were willing to provide international assistance declined from 30 in 2015 to 22 in 2017.

[2] Available from www.un.org/disarmament/revcon3/.

[3] With a view to contributing substantively to meeting discussions, in advance of the Third Review Conference, 117 States submitted national reports which cover the implementation period from 2016 to 2017.

[4] Available from http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?datasetcode=CRS1#.

19. The number of States requesting international assistance, however, has increased, from 40 in 2015 to 59 in 2017. In the most recent national reports, the need for assistance relating to international transfers has also increased. Other thematic issues, such as stockpile management, collection and destruction of weapons and marking and record-keeping, continued to feature prominently in assistance requests.

C. Coordinating Action on Small Arms

20. Coordinating Action on Small Arms was created by the Secretary-General in 1998 as a coordination mechanism within the United Nations system to address the negative impact of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Taking stock of diverse and specialized expertise, 23 partners work together with a view to achieving enhanced coordination on small arms control, the arms trade and ammunition and stockpile management.

21. The principals of the Coordinating Action on Small Arms partners met in May and consolidated United Nations system support for the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament and his vision for a coherent funding mechanism for small arms.

22. During the reporting period, the Coordinating Action on Small Arms continued to facilitate discussion on relevant issues, including the development and implementation of the International Small Arms Control Standards, improvised explosive devices, weapons and ammunition management in a changing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration context, the impact of arms transfers on human rights (see Human Rights Council resolution 32/12 and A/HRC/35/8), the prevention of acquisition of weapons by terrorists (see Security Council resolution 2220 (2015)), gender and small arms and light weapons,[5] and funding for international assistance through the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation.

D. Group of Interested States for Practical Disarmament Measures

23. The Group of Interested States continued to facilitate the discussion of practical disarmament activities. In preparation for the Third Review Conference of the Programme of Action, the Group highlighted practical and field-oriented approaches to curbing illicit arms flows in Africa. At its meeting in October 2017, participants, including representatives of United Nations entities and regional organizations and civil society experts, discussed relevant topics, including countering transnational arms trafficking in the Sahel and Maghreb regions, physical security and stockpile management in the Economic Community of West African States subregion and more effective peacekeeping operations. At its meeting in May 2017, the Group discussed how to take into consideration gender perspectives, with a view to implementing more effective small arms control measures.[6] The co-chairs recommended, inter alia, enhanced participation and representation of women in policymaking, decision-making, programming and budgeting in small arms-related activities; consideration of the potential impact of gender-based violence when making small arms transfer decisions; and inclusion of gender-sensitive small arms and light weapons control indicators in national action plans on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

[5] See www.seesac.org/gender-and-small-arms.

[6] See the co-chairs' summary, available from https://s3.amazonaws.com/unoda-web/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/outcome-GISmeeting-25May2017-gender.pdf.

E. International Small Arms Control Standards

24. The International Small Arms Control Standards[7] provide practical guidance covering the full life cycle of small arms and light weapons, with a view to reducing the risk of their falling into the hands of criminals, terrorists or others who would misuse them.

25. The International Small Arms Control Standards remained in wide use across the United Nations system during the reporting period, demonstrating their relevance to the work of the United Nations under the humanitarian, peace and security and development pillars. At the end of 2017, the Standards were in use in 111 countries, and the assessment tool,[8] developed by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, had been used in more than 80 States. The Coordinating Action on Small Arms, the custodian of the Standards, broadened their potential applications with the launch of new modules on designing and implementing community safety programming, awareness-raising and women, men and the gendered nature of small arms and light weapons.

26. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa assisted the Governments of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and the Niger to develop national standard operating procedures on small arms stockpile management on the basis of International Small Arms Control Standard No. 05.20, on stockpile management. The Regional Centre also trained national authorities and civil society from the Lake Chad Basin on the Standards and the related assessment tool.

27. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean utilized the International Small Arms Control Standards to support the "laying down of arms" component of the peace process negotiated between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia — People's Army. The Regional Centre, together with the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, worked with Governments and private security service providers in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Peru to strengthen regulation and oversight of the use of small arms by private security companies, in accordance with International Small Arms Control Standard No. 03.30, on national regulation of civilian access to small arms and light weapons.

F. United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation

28. In response to States' call for an improved funding mechanism to better match assistance needs with available resources, the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation was established in 2013. A total of 64 projects on an aggregated budget of $9 million have been implemented since the Trust Facility's inception. To date, 140 States have benefited directly or indirectly from the activities funded by the Trust Facility, and 12 donors[9] have provided financial support.

29. During the reporting period, funded activities included capacity-building for national authorities and civil society organizations, the development of implementation tools and guides, action-oriented research and the development of

[7] Available from www.smallarmsstandards.org.

[8] Available from www.smallarmsstandards.org/tools.

[9] Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

information platforms and databases. Relevant thematic issues included illicit production, tracing, stockpile management, end use/end user control, brokering, gender-related considerations and public awareness-raising.

30. During the reporting period, there were efforts to strengthen implementation of practical activities in the African region, in partnership with regional and civil society organizations. In the greater Sahel region, the African Union developed operational guidelines on weapons stockpile management and provided relevant training courses to national authorities. In West and Central Africa, civil society partners addressed the craft manufacture of small arms, provided policy guidance to States neighbouring countries under arms embargoes and built national capacity to trace small arms that are collected. Two special-circumstances projects, which are undertaken when there is an urgent need to be addressed at any time during the funding cycle, were implemented to assess and relocate stockpile facilities in Eswatini and Saint Lucia.

31. The Trust Facility's call for proposals for projects to be implemented in 2019[10] opened in June 2018. The new thematic priorities for the 2018–2019 cycle further reinforce the integration of arms control efforts into national development agendas, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

[10] See www.un.org/disarmament/unscar.